

PITTSBURGH & LAKE ERIE RAILROAD, LOCOMOTIVE REPAIR  
SHOPS  
River Road at Chartiers Avenue  
McKees Rocks  
Allegheny County  
Pennsylvania

HAER PA-641  
*PA-641*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

### PITTSBURGH & LAKE ERIE RAILROAD, LOCOMOTIVE REPAIR SHOPS

HAER No. PA-641

LOCATION: River Road at Chartiers Avenue, McKees Rocks, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

DATES OF  
CONSTRUCTION: 1885, 1903

ARCHITECT/  
ENGINEER: Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad

PRESENT OWNERS: Clifton Heat Treating Company owns the Erection Shop. Enterprise Bank owns the Boiler & Tank Shop.

SIGNIFICANCE: This complex was built for the maintenance of the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad's steam and later diesel locomotives in 1903. The surviving structures reflect the industrial architectural heritage of the region. The Erection Shop is one of the finest surviving industrial buildings in Pittsburgh.

DESCRIPTION: Three major buildings were photographed for this documentation project. The **Erection Shop** was built in 1903 for the repair and maintenance of steam locomotives. The twenty-four-bay long building has two distinct sections: the three-story, four-bay wide erection shed, and the two-story, five-bay wide machine shop, with three saw tooth monitors on top. The erection shed section is built to look like a Roman basilica with round-headed windows atop a three story arcade, corbelling between brick pilasters, and a decorative cornice. The interior structure is steel frame, wide enough for four locomotives to sit abreast during repairs, moved into position by electric overhead cranes. Adjacent to the Erection shop sits the **Boiler & Tank Shop**. It has a matching cornice, with corbelling between the brick piers, sheathing a steel frame. One-story tall, it has rectangular, tripartite industrial windows over entry doors. Ten saw tooth monitors brought in light from above. The **Diesel Shop** is further west along the line, beyond a viaduct used by the Pittsburgh, Chartiers & Youghioghenny Railway (PC&Y). Used to serve diesel locomotives beginning in the 1950s, it is two stories tall, with a brick exterior similar to the Boiler & Tank Shop. It features nine rows of rectangular clerestory roofs, and the name "Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad Locomotive Shops" is spelled out in large letters along the P&LE's mainline.

- HISTORY:** The Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad was incorporated in 1875, and ran freight and passenger service from Pittsburgh to Youngstown, Ohio, along the Allegheny and Beaver rivers, as a subsidiary of the New York Central Railroad. The P&LE first developed this site as a railyard and shops facility along its right-of-way in McKees Rocks just west of downtown Pittsburgh, in 1885. It was once an extensive complex to serve steam and then diesel engines with two roundhouses; locomotive, freight car, wheel, boiler and tank shops; powerhouse; office; and storage buildings. Following the demise of the steel industry in Pittsburgh and Youngstown, and the closure of the P&LE, the site ceased railroad operations in the 1980s. Only a handful of buildings survived in 2005. Part of the Erection Shop was used by a heat treating company, and the Boiler & Tank Shop was leased to a limousine company.
- SOURCES:** Franklin Toker. Buildings of Pittsburgh. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007.  
Drawings from University of Pittsburgh Archive Service Center, P&LE RR Collection: "P&LE RR New Diesel Shop" 1-7-1952, Sheet 2 of 2; "P&LE RR New Diesel Shop," 12-27-1951, Sheet 1 of 2.  
Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad Historical Society website, <http://www.plerrhs.org/>, accessed 12/13/2006.  
Kahndog Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad photo gallery, <http://www.kahndog.com/PhotoGalleryMain.htm>, accessed 12/13/2006.
- PROJECT INFORMATION:** This short form history was prepared to supplement photographic documentation of historic sites in western Pennsylvania. In 2005 Nicholas Traub photographed several sites for the *Buildings of Western Pennsylvania* publications, with funding from HABS/HAER/HALS. The Society of Architectural Historians cosponsored the photography project and is producing two volumes, *Buildings of Pittsburgh* and *Buildings of Pennsylvania: Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania* as part of their *Buildings of the United States* series published by the University of Virginia Press. The documentation was facilitated by Lu Donnelly, Project Director, Buildings of Western Pennsylvania, for the Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh. The documentation was edited and transmitted in the Washington office of HABS/HAER/HALS by Christopher H. Marston, HAER Architect.
- RELATED DOCUMENTATION:** Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Station, HABS No. PA-1231  
Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad, Ohio River Bridge, HAER No. PA-510